

Rev. Jas. B. Cushing

Historical Discourse

One Hundred
and Fiftieth Anniversary

First Congregational Church
Wells, Maine

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HISTORICAL DISCOURSE;

DELIVERED OCT. 29, 1851, AT THE

One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary

OF THE ORGANIZATION OF THE

First Congregational Church,

(THE SECOND IN THE STATE,) IN

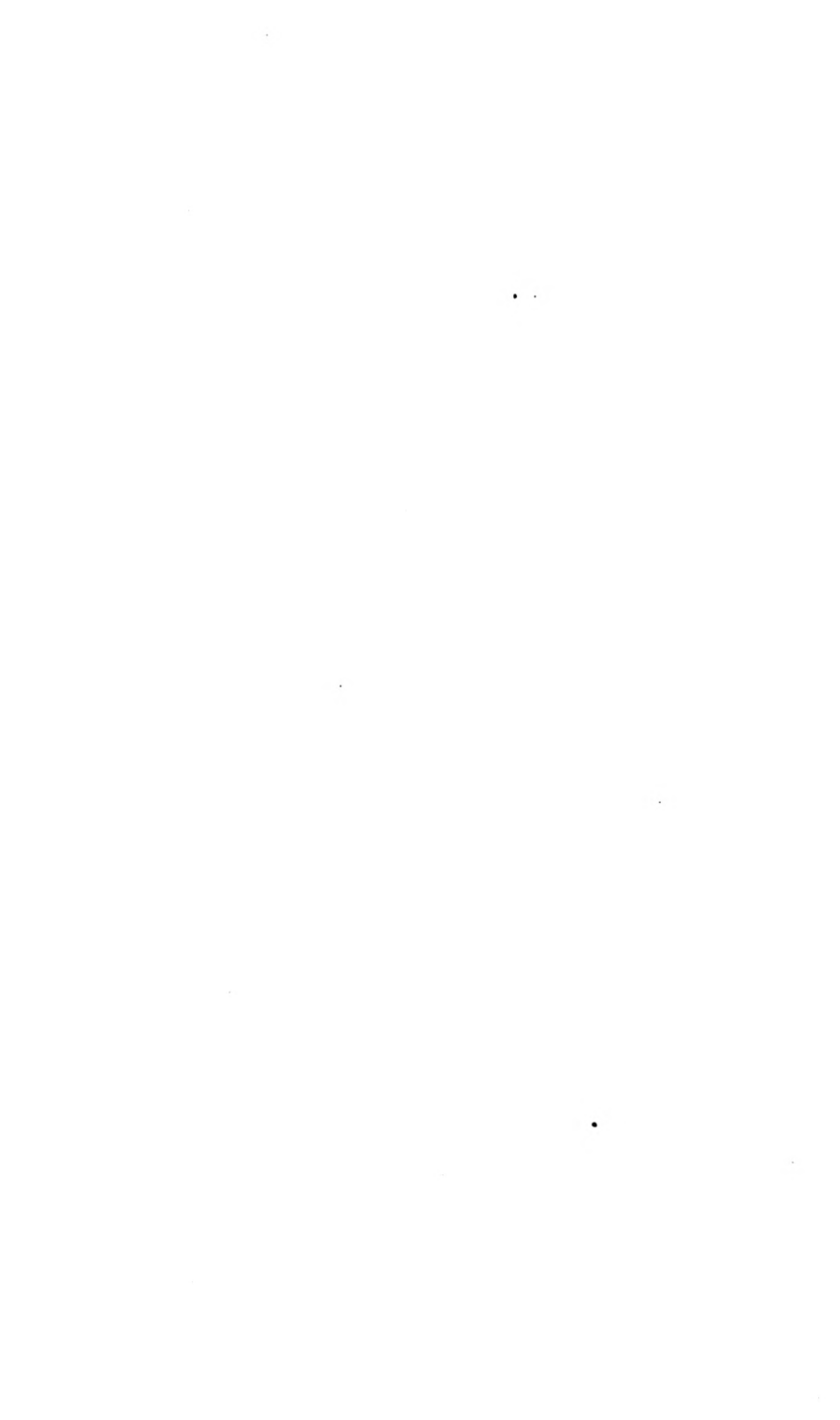
WELLS, MAINE,

By REV. JAS. R. CUSHING.



PORTLAND:

1851.



DISCOURSE.

Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.—Ps. 45 : 16.

SUCH is the prediction of the royal psalmist respecting the christian church. He commences the psalm with a glowing description of the excellency and dignity of the Messiah, her founder and head. "My heart," he says, "is inditing a good matter," or more literally, boileth or bubbleth up a good word. "I speak of the things which I have made touching the King. My tongue is the pen of a ready writer." "He was," says Bishop Horne, "full of the divine spirit, which inspired him with the good word or the glad tidings of salvation. The sacred fire enclosed in his heart, expanded itself within, till at length it broke forth with impetuosity to enlighten and revive mankind with the glorious prediction touching the King, the Messiah; and this was uttered under the guidance of the spirit, as the pen is directed by the hand that holds it" Having spoken of the King, the head of the church, of his spiritual beauty and eloquence, for grace was poured into his lips; of victories and power over his enemies; of his throne and sceptre; of his righteousness, royal robes and palace, all glorious within, he introduces the church as his spouse. He describes her dress and appearance, foretells her future prosperity when nations would bring their choicest gifts and lay them at her feet. Next he sets forth her altars with her numerous attendants and the universal joy and gladness consequent upon the grand solemnization of her nuptials and the precious and abundant fruits of the union. "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth" He assures the spouse of the church an illustrious and royal progeny of believers, who should become kings and priests unto God, and reign ever on earth as in

reality the most honorable persons in any land. They were to reign, however, not so much by actually wielding the sceptre of dominion, or by wearing the badges, and sitting upon the throne of royalty, as by the broad and deep moral power of their principles. Through all ages a numerous succession of converts should arise out of this new and sacred relation between the Messiah and the church, whose influence for the good of mankind should reach from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth; thus clearly indicating that the time would come when the church, however much despised and oppressed, should, of her sons, furnish kings and rulers through all nations, as well as innumerable heirs of an eternal kingdom in Heaven. That the true church is to become universal, is to possess the kingdom and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heavens, is confirmed both by promises and prophecy. The last verse of the Psalm is in point: I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever. This verse shows Dr. Scott, "That Christ and the church are immediately and expressly intended throughout the Psalm. The language is peculiarly emphatical and can mean nothing less than all succeeding generations to the end of the earth, and likewise to endless ages in Heaven" And there can be no reasonable doubt but that this will be verified in the event. To nothing else on earth are there such glorious and transcendent promises made as are made to the true church. And, oh, if these promises were only engraved upon her heart, as they are engraven upon the divine heart, what sorrow after a godly sort, what carefulness, yea, what clearing of themselves; yea, what indignation; yea, what fear, yea what vehement desire, yea what zeal, yea, what revenge would be wrought into the heart of all her members *that in all respects they might approve themselves to be clear* in every matter, which should, in the least, stain her beauty, or mar her honor or retard her growth.

In the humble hope of stirring up your minds by way of

remembrance, I have desired to speak to you, my brethren, on this occasion, with no ordinary depth of interest. Today we occupy an important position, a position which renders it peculiarly proper and important to reflect not only upon the love and fidelity of God to the church, but upon the days and years that are now numbered and finished. Today one hundred and fifty years ago, this church was organized and received from the hands of a small council composed of the ministers from Newbury, Dover, Portsmouth and York their first regularly ordained minister. But the fathers where are they? One generation of them after another has passed away, and long, long before another century and a half has been numbered, *we* shall all have been laid by their side in the solemn silence of the grave. As you have most of you the history of this church, as drawn up by a much abler hand than mine, in your possession, there will be no necessity of my occupying your attention with anything more than an incidental allusion to the past, and that only as it shall be found necessary in order to illustrate and enforce the truth of the text. That the fathers have long since been numbered with the dead; and *that you*, many of you their lineal descendants, are now here before God is proof that "instead of thy fathers shall be thy children." In pursuing the subject thus introduced I propose

I. In the first place to call your attention to the character of the fathers.

II. In the second place to notice the promise, "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children."

III. The advantages of having such an ancestry.

IV. The obligations resting upon us to hand down unimpaired the institutions and influences they have left us.

In the first place we are to notice the character of the fathers.

We cannot *think* as we should *think*, nor *feel* as we should *feel*, nor *be* what we should *be*, without frequent and protracted communings with the characters that have lived before us, without serious reflection on the events that are

already registered in the chronicles of time. It might be reasonably supposed that a godly ancestry would prove a great blessing to their descendants, were there no facts to demonstrate it. For they whom the Lord has delighted in, to love them, live not unto themselves, but for their generation and their posterity. It seems needless to say that the fathers and founders of these Eastern states were pious men, who for conscience sake sought a residence in this land that they might enjoy the religious privileges which were denied them in the land of their nativity. About the year 1600 the counties of Lincolnshire and Lancastershire in old England were visited with a revival of vital religion. Many of the fathers were partakers of its spiritual benefits. From that time they came to prize religion in its vitality above all earthly considerations. Our ancestry were subjects of a revival of pure and undefiled religion. Their history is not enveloped in an absurd mythology nor lost in an extreme antiquity. We know the men and their communication. Their records are recent and authentic. We are familiar with the names of the adventurers by whom this land was discovered and settled, and by whom our civil and religious institutions were planted and defended. The places from which they came, the time when and the object for which they came are all on record. Plymouth, the place where the first permanent European settlement was made, is a name familiar with the youngest of our common school children. They were a part of the congregation which, with Rev. John Robinson their pastor and an orthodox congregational minister, fled from England to Holland, in consequence of persecution in their native land. But after a residence of a few years in Holland, finding their *children*, whom they wished above all things to train up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, exposed to various temptations from the pernicious amusements by which they were surrounded, and that they might enjoy a larger religious liberty, they, after much prayer and mutual consultation, determined on a removal to this land. Unlike the settlers of South America, or the

more recent settlers of California, gold was not their object. They were actuated by a pure and lofty religious interest. That they might escape from the errors of Rome and enjoy civil and religious liberty, train up their children in the way they should go, and for God and His church, and transmit to them and their posterity a pure religion and a scriptural mode of worship, they were willing to endure deprivation, hardship and exile. They were a reading and reflecting people, a people of pure morals, of rigid honesty, of patient, self-denying industry. They had great courage and strong faith. They were men of prayer. They believed in its efficacy, and hence they entered upon no enterprise except such as they could commend to heaven by prayer. They sanctified the holy sabbath. Even when famine stared them in the face, they felt it far safer to trust in the God of the sabbath than to engage in any questionable or doubtful expedients for a supply. They gathered their children and households about them for morning and evening prayers. This delightful exercise at an early period was almost universal. So important was it viewed that those who neglected it had very little reputation for intelligence or character. This service proved a bond of union, a means of order and a source of knowledge. Besides family worship, they often assembled for mutual exhortation and encouragement. So fearful and anxious were they for the young that they often observed whole days of fasting and prayer, in which they pleaded with God to revive his work among their children. Believing that God was a covenant-keeping God, that he would be true to his people, and had made the richest promises to them and their posterity, they entered into covenant with, and dedicated their children to him in the ordinance of baptism, thus binding themselves to instruct and govern them, that they might plead the more earnestly his promises of grace and mercy in their behalf. Oh if we could *now* look into the register kept in heaven might we not find thousands of prayers recorded against our names! They catechised their children. They built school-

houses for them and planted churches ; were prompt in public worship. We have the solemn and explicit testimony of ministers, statesmen and historians that religion was the grand cause why these Eastern territories were first settled. They were also as eminently patriotic as they were religious. To prepare them to lay the foundations of many generations, like the Jews in Egypt, God subjected them to a course of the severest and most rigid discipline. To lay such foundations it required men sound in judgment, practical in wisdom, and sincere in piety ; men who had courage and patience, who could brave dangers, endure hardship ; men who could be content with coarse fare, coarse apparel, and rude dwellings. And just such were the fathers. They were the right sort of men and the right sort of women to engage in the work for which God had fitted them. They were in fact the only men on earth who could or would have made New England what it is. Would pagan or infidel parents have trained up such a race of children ? Would papists have left to their descendants a family altar, a sanctified civil and religious liberty, and an unshackled press ? Would they have planted free schools, and trained the young to reading, and especially to the reading of the Bible ? Would they have instilled into the infant mind the rights of conscience and the principles of our holy religion ? Let the degraded condition of Mexico and all papal countries testify. The rejected, the wronged and oppressed Puritans were the only people under the sun who, except by miracle, could or would have reared up for their posterity such institutions as the fathers of this land have left for us. And the religion of the Puritans was the only religion given under heaven among men, which could have sustained them amidst such hardships, sacrifices and labors as they were called to endure while subduing, in the face of a most subtle, insidious and bloodthirsty foe, the mighty wilderness which spread all over this land. But God was their God and they were his people. They sought his honor and he sought their welfare. In doctrine they were generally Calvinists, in church gov-

ernment Congregationalists; doctrine and government essentially republican and democratic. Beginning with the principles and genius of the gospel, they drew from them the fundamental elements of a free government, mild yet firm, individual yet general: a government modeled not for the aggrandisement of the few and the debasement of the many, but for the defence and perpetuity of the rights of all. Having secured these at an amazing cost of labor and time and blood and treasure, they have laid themselves down in death and gone to their rewards. We leave them to notice

II. Some of the advantages derived from such fathers.

It would be culpable in us to refer merely to farms cleared of the forest, to barns and dwelling houses erected by their hands and vessels constructed at their cost. These are of comparatively small moment. Far richer was the real inheritance they left. Let the Egyptians glory in their pyramids, the Greeks in their sculpture, the Roman or Italian in cathedrals and paintings, *we* have a more glorious and enduring heritage from our ancestors. Our government, the *union* of these states, constitutes an enviable item in the grand legacy bequeathed to us by our fathers. To their careful study of the Bible, their faith in God, their humble piety, united with their noble patriotism we owe it that our government was formed after a divine model, rather than after the aristocracies of the old world. An elective government of necessity places all power with the body of the people. And here is its true and legitimate source. All offices of trust and profit are open to each individual who has the energy and enterprise to qualify himself for them. Taxation is nowhere allowed beyond what is necessary for the welfare of the great whole. The poor man's house is his castle, and except for crime no man may forcibly enter it unbidden. The president may no more enter it, except at the will of the owner, than the obscurest beggar. I would, but I am warned of the want of time, speak of many things which endear this legacy to us as of the greatest value.

Next to our government our common school system should be recognized as an invaluable advantage. For even the preaching of the gospel is of comparatively little value among the ignorant and unenlightened people. Our missionaries can do little for the benefit of those to whom they bear the tidings of salvation, until they have poured the light of science into the mind on which they would operate. Under this admirable system no child need be shut up in the more than iron bondage of ignorance. Says an able writer, "this system is simple in its structure, but uniform, universal and efficient in its operation. Its parallel is hardly to be found in the legislation of the earth." If the question be asked where does the great body of the people acquire its taste for reading, its general intelligence and talent for business, the answer is at hand. It is the peculiar glory of the fathers that this system was so early adopted, and it is immensely to the credit of their children that they are carrying it forward with increasing efficiency.

The next grand bequest of the fathers I may mention with a just pride. I allude to a permanent and learned ministry. With a good government and an intelligent people the value of the ministry is greatly enhanced. I cannot so well say what I wish to say on this subject, as in the language of another. "The fathers established churches with their first settlement on these shores. They took their households with them to the place of worship on each returning sabbath. They provided for the support of an able, devout and intelligent ministry. They expected that the priest's lips would teach knowledge. They waited at the gates of wisdom with reverence and prayerfulness. The Word of God was read and expounded. Hymns of praise were sung. Prayers were offered, and the sacraments were administered. These services were renewed every sabbath, and from year to year. No one can tell in this state of being, how widely extensive and how deeply operative is this system of divine ordinances. The conscience becomes enlightened, the understanding enlarged, the heart subdued and the passions

restrained. Saints are confirmed and sinners are converted. Thousands of minds are strongly affected from sabbath to sabbath. These means of knowledge and salvation, divinely ordained and approved, do much to mould and stamp the character of a people. And to the pure and salutary influence of this divine system were we subject in our early years. Much of our talent and moral virtue may be traced to this source. Nor should we think this item overrated if we could look into the actual condition of pagan lands. Truth is pure. Error is contaminating. Idolatry renders base and abject, but christianity elevates."

Of the four original proprietors one was a clergyman—under the sentence of banishment, to be sure, but doubtless a good man. The Bible, the daily companion and counsellor of the Puritan, was left by the fathers to their children. This of itself was an invaluable legacy. I might speak of the *example* of the fathers also as a most precious bequest, for they being dead still speak, but I need not. The advantages derived from these are admirably summed up by the Hon. Abbot Lawrence, our present Minister to England. In a speech in Galway, Ireland, he says, "Give the people universal education—and I beg to be understood on this point, living as I do in a country that is ruled by self government, a government of the people and from the people—*our* only security lies in universal education founded on religion. I would teach every man, woman and child to read and write; place the Bible in their hands and the people will take care of them."

III. We pass in the third place to the promise of God that instead of thy fathers shall be thy children. Has God kept this promise? We think he has and with wonderful fidelity. God is a covenant-keeping God. Blessings promised to the fathers do descend to their children. Says *Moses* to the Israelites, "Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers, that is, in Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to love them, and he chose their seed after them." And again he said, "O that there were such an heart to fear me." God loved the fathers of New England,

and hence he has suffered no weapon forced against them or their children to prosper. Now has God kept the promise, "Instead of thy fathers" etc.? Let us look at it in the light of the New England church, and of this church. Here was formed, 150 years ago, the second church in this state. Now there are 225 of our own denomination, with about 1700 members and 166 pastors. Look over the church and see what God has wrought. Look at New England and see what God has done. Look over these United States, and see what God has done. Look at the great West. See there what God is doing. Wherever the pure New England element is found, wherever their descendants are found, there are found the school, the church and the Bible. And who are the leading men in these churches? Who are their ministers? Search out their genealogy and you will find Puritan blood running in almost all their veins. In Western New York the leading element in church and state is a Puritan element. The hardy emigrants from New England plunged into its dark, dense forests, and have in less than fifty years converted them into a fruitful field and planted them with churches of the living God. Go West, and there you will find the descendants of the Puritans the salt of that fertile land. Who have planted their colleges and who are their teachers? New England men. Who are the teachers of Western children? Turn to the records of the society recently formed for the supply of teachers at the West, and there you will find the name of many a New England daughter baptised in childhood into the sentiment of the fathers, and baptized in heart by the Holy Spirit. Go to California. You will find crime there in its most naked and deformed features. Where will you look for justice? Where for those who are a terror to evil doers and the security of such as do well? You will find it in their vigilance committee of a 1000 men, a majority of whom are the sons of the Puritans. Grant that technically their proceedings are illegal. In all my heart I believe that in that same illegal body there is concentrated more of stern justice and of good government than can be found in the nominal officers of state. Go to Ore-

gon. Whose hands are rearing their houses of worship? Children of my past Sunday school are there. The sons of Maine are there, preaching the gospel and wielding the pen and the press. It is estimated that the lineal descendants of the Puritans now amount to about four and a half millions. These are exerting an influence on every sea and all through our land. God has kept his promise. Instead of the fathers the children have been multiplied a 100 or a 1000 fold. Look at our church or rather at the town. Of the four original proprietors one was a clergyman, Rev. John Wheelwright, under censure, to be sure, but a good man doubtless. It is now a little over 208 years since the first permanent settlement was made. During that whole period this part of the town has been destitute of a ministry of our denomination but a fraction over 22 years. There was some irregularity attending the original church in the place. As the records have not come down to us, if any were kept, we are not able to specify what the irregularity was. From 1664 to 1690 six ministers were employed, viz., Joseph Emerson, Jeremiah Hubbard, Robert Payne, John Bass, Percival Green and Richard Martin. At an early period a meetinghouse was built, and a parsonage also. It is probable, says Mr. Greenleaf, that the people here were destitute of preaching for several years toward the close of the century. At that time almost every settlement in Maine was broken up by the savages, and that at Wells narrowly escaped. In 1701 the religious affairs of the town assumed a more distinct and prosperous shape. On the 29th of October, 1701, the church was organized and Mr. Samuel Emery ordained. His ministry continued 24 years. The church adopted the baptismal form and covenant signed by the following male members: John Wheelwright, William Sayer, Josiah Littlefield, Jon. Littlefield, Samuel Hill, Joseph Hill, Daniel Littlefield, Nath'l Clark, Thomas Boston, Nathaniel Claves, Jas. Adams, and Jeremiah Storer. This was wholly discontinued about a year after the settlement of Mr. White. Although there appears to have been no special revival during his ministry, he received into full communion 56 members by profession and 13 by letter. Dec. 15, 1725, Mr.

Samuel Jefferds was ordained over the church. His ministry was evidently a spiritual ministry. He was a young man, being only 21 at the time of his settlement. The beginning of Mr. Jefferds' ministry was prosperous, and a considerable number were admitted to full communion within a year after his ordination. From the year 1740-42, the period so memorable throughout all New England for the wonderful revivals with which almost all the churches were favored, the labors of Mr. Jefferds seem to have been greatly blessed. Within three months from Jan., 1741, 39 persons were admitted to the church, and during the whole season of awakening 71 persons were received to the church. Instead of the fathers were the children. From the known character of Mr. Jefferds it is to be presumed, says Mr. Greenleaf, they all gave satisfactory evidence of a change of heart. In 1750 the second church in Wells, now Kennebunk, was formed of members from this church resident there. Mr. Jefferds died at the age of 48, and the 26th year of his ministry, greatly lamented by all. After his decease Mr. Samuel Fayrweather was invited to settle with the people. He returned an affirmative answer, but owing to a strong minority against him the council called for the purpose declined ordaining him. February 27, 1754, Rev. Gideon Richardson was ordained over the church, but lived only four years.

In 1756 Wells was favored with a second revival. It took place soon after the great earthquake, which is said to have very much affected the mind of Mr. Richardson. He evidently became more engaged from that time, and in the course of one year received 41 persons to the church on profession of their faith. After the death of Mr. Richardson Mr. Moses Hemmenway, a graduate of Harvard College, was employed to preach as a candidate. Having received a call from the church and people he was ordained August 8, 1759. About the time of the settlement of Mr. Hemmenway the affairs of the colonies were thrown into a most perplexing state by the oppressive exactions of the British government. Besides this, the extravagances of a class of self-styled revivalists, who

arrogated to themselves all the piety in the land, who went about sowing everywhere the seeds of dissension and strife, and from the melancholy defection of vast numbers of their supposed converts, many became disgusted and lost their confidence in the reality of revival. The result was, together with the political agitation of the country, that the great desideratum of the minister was to keep the peace within his parish. If he succeeded in this he gave the greater satisfaction. The ministry of Dr. Hemmenway was eminently successful in this respect. It was protracted through more than half a century, and was, as Mr. Greenleaf expresses it, uncommonly peaceful and happy. Dr. Hemmenway was a profound scholar. The great esteem in which he was held by the learned and good men of his day is manifested in the doctorate which he received from Cambridge College at a much earlier period of his life, than that college was wont to bestow upon her sons. He was a diligent and indefatigable student. He fed the people with knowledge. He never offered to the people, says Dr. Buckminster, that which cost him nothing. His sermons were elaborate and profoundly studied. If he failed, he failed in a style and mode of reasoning above the apprehension of most of his hearers. He enlightened the understanding more than he warmed the heart. In doctrine he was a Calvinist of the old school, a firm believer and faithful instructor in the Assembly's Catechism. In avoiding the extra vagaries and excesses of those who addressed from the pulpit only the imagination and passions, he doubtless went to the opposite extreme of addressing only the intellect, an error quite common with almost all his contemporaries. Dr. Hemmenway was to some extent a controversialist and a faithful defender of the faith of the Puritans against the Arian and Socinian tendencies of the day. Although less successful in the immediate accession of members to the church than his predecessors, he unquestionably fulfilled an important mission to the church during his protracted and peaceful ministry. God used him in his day for a mission according to the dictates of his own infinite wis-

dom. And to any who are disposed to charge him with a culpable delinquency, I seem to hear the God of Israel say, "My ways are not your ways," etc. It is due to the descendants of Dr. Hemmenway that they are found among the most active defenders of an orthodox faith. We know what those are who dwell among us. The branch resident in Lyman is found among the most spiritual and active of the church there. Of the Wells branch may be found two of New Hampshire's most profound and devoted ministers. Nevertheless it must be acknowledged that from the time of the revival under Mr. Richardson a gradual decline may be traced, and from 55 divine influences were withheld; and although the people were still favored with a faithful minister no particular attention appeared. In 1810 Dr. Hemmenway's health began to decline, and Mr. White, from Thetford, a theological student of Dr. Brewster, came to Wells in the autumn of that year and preached as a candidate for settlement as colleague with Dr. Hemmenway. Mr. White was an eminently spiritual man. His very look, which I well remember when I was a child, was an impressive sermon. He lived as one standing on the brink of eternity. Premonition of the disease of which he died, made him feel that his time was short and that what he did must be done quickly. Some of his first sermons made a lasting impression upon the minds of the people. He received a unanimous call to settle with the people, to which he returned an affirmative answer, but not till after the death of Dr. Hemmenway. He returned in the spring of 1811, when the minds of the people became more interested and in the course of the summer the attention became general. Mr. White was ordained June 26, 1811. The spirit was evidently poured from on high. The Lord gave the word and many fell before it. The seed sown for years before now appeared to spring up and bear fruit. Mr. White being soon taken from his labors by sickness, did not live to gather more than half of those who were hopefully converted under his instrumentality. Mr. White was a man of warm heart and deep toned piety. He so spake that many believed, and having

spoken, he early went to his rest. He died at the age of 33.

Soon after his decease Mr. David Oliphant was employed as a candidate and received a call which he declined. Mr. Greenleaf was next employed. He was ordained March 8, 1815. In the early part of his ministry a goodly number were received into the church, principally the fruits of the revival under Mr. White. During the year 1813 there was an interesting revival the fruits of which were gradually received to the church. From 1815 to 1825 there were received 16 males and 64 females. In 1826 there was not a single member added. In the autumn of that year the pastor and a brother of the church met in the road. Their conversation turned upon the low state of religion. Before they separated they agreed to make particular families the subject of special prayer, and to converse with individuals as they might have opportunity. God heard the prayers and smiled upon the effort. In January at a church meeting held at a private house the work of God assumed a distinct and marked character. A large number were present and an awful solemnity rested upon each mind. They felt that they were transacting business for eternity, and that the decisions of that hour might be the decision of an everlasting destiny. It was clear that God had come down to visit and bless his people. The Bible became the book of books. It lay open upon the table that the female might glance upon its open page as she pursued her domestic duties, and on the wheel as she spun her yarn. The work continued for months with deep and solemn interest. Converts were multiplied of all ages. But the Bible class was made the field on which the precious rain descended most copiously. The youth became large sharers in the work. A few united with the church in the spring and summer. On the 2d of September, 1827, 10 males and 22 females, 32 in all, united with the church. From April 12 to Nov. 4, 1827, 77 made a public profession of their faith in Christ. Soon after Mr. Greenleaf received an invitation to preach to seamen in Boston, which he felt it his duty to accept, and was accordingly dismissed for that purpose. In February, 1829, Rev. William Clark

was ordained to the pastoral office. He brought to the work all the ardor and zeal of his naturally warm and sanguine temperament. He sought out the enemy in all strongholds, and so daring and determined were his assaults, that while he maddened the foe, he startled many of the friends of righteousness, temperance and truth. This together with some unintentionally unqualified points in doctrine, points on which the fathers were sensitive above almost all else, led to the formation of the Second Parish and church. This is neither the time nor the place to speak of the wisdom or necessity of that enterprise. Suffice it to say that the fortresses of iniquity soon began to tremble. Neutrality was out of the question. He was everywhere and at every man. The ingenuous "My dear sir," or "My dear madam," opened the way to the heart. His assaults upon intemperance were with thunder and lightning and the earthquake, and many, many is the man who will remember him as his saviour from the grave of the inebriate. The temperance reform prepared the way for that pentecostal season which opened upon this people, as the windows of heaven are sometimes opened, in the commencement of a protracted meeting of almost unprecedented power. It occurred May, 1831, and began amidst descending rain. The farmer was compelled to leave his plough and his field. The neighbor beheld neighbor wending his way through the pouring rain, and said I also will go with you. The female could not refrain; she too gathered about her the garment that would best protect her from the falling shower and made her way to the house of prayer. Each was astonished to behold the crowd, astonished at himself that he should be there in such a rain. Conscience whispered the hand of God is in this. And conscience whispered the truth. God was in it, and the rain without was but an emblem of the reign of righteousness about to be given. The preaching commenced. The arrows of conviction flew thick and fast. God gave the word, and many a stout heart quailed before it.

But why attempt to describe it? To be just in the description one must have been an eye witness. You cannot have forgotten the scenes that transpired during that solemn, and, in

some of its aspects, awful convocation. You cannot have forgotten how you felt and how you prayed then. You cannot have forgotten the day and the scene when one of our *now* old men, stung by the reflection that he was a sinner, deserving the lowest hell, and condemned already, was forced to cry out for mercy, or rather to kneel before that ancient altar, before the great congregation when the hand and the voice of heaven's ambassador was lifted up to God in his behalf. You cannot have forgotten the troubled look, the heaving bosom, the tearful eye and the trembling voice of the anxious inquirer while the question was propounded "What *must* I do to be saved?" You cannot have forgotten the trembling crowds gathered at your old parsonage, your thronged morning prayer meetings. You cannot have forgotten the solicitude the parent felt for the child, or the child for the parent. Nor can you have forgotten how good every sermon seemed, whether it were the result of momentary reflection or the result of profound study. Nor yet again can you have forgotten those occasions occurring on almost all the sacrament sabbaths when so many of you entered into solemn covenant with God. O how did you feel when you made those promises to God that you could never, should never dare to break from. There was doubtless far more of animal excitement in this revival than in any preceding one.

Mr. Clark's ministry continued eight years, during which 149 members were received to the church. Surely "instead of thy fathers," etc. He was dismissed at his own request that he might occupy a wider field as agent of the Foreign Missions. He was succeeded by Rev. Jonas Colburn. During his ministry the church was favored with another season of the effusion of the Holy Spirit. From March 11, 1838 to July 30, 1843, 45 members were received to the church. He was dismissed October, 1844, and was succeeded by your present pastor, who was installed Nov. 20 of the same year. Since his installation you have enjoyed one whole year of sabbaths. These years, which embrace the year of sabbaths, while they have been the most laborious, the most painfully anxious and wasting to body and mind, have been the most unsuccessful, pro-

vided the standard of judgment be made the number of hopeful conversions and the number added to the church. There have been added to the church only ten, and but three of that number by profession, while 16 members of the church have deceased within seven years, and the same number have been dismissed to other churches. Had time permitted I would have been glad to have gone more at length into statistics. But it would not. As our meeting is only in recognition of the 150th anniversary of the church, I have as a matter of propriety kept myself within the religious history of the town.

We pass in conclusion to a consideration of the fourth topic specified in our plan, viz., the obligations resting upon the descendants of such parents to hand down unimpaired the institutions planted by the fathers. Obviously in the first place we owe an amazing debt to such an ancestry. They have placed before us in most respects an example worthy of a most faithful imitation. Had they not been what they were, we should not have been what we now are. As the peculiar gestures of the father are acted over again in the child, and as the lip of the little one is still playing the mother's own smile, though she be gone, so the past by wonderful communication infuses something of its own character into whatever follows it. He who has no reverence for the past is an unnatural son mocking at age, forswearing his own father. So is he whose heart is not warmed with gratitude for such fathers. Turn to the word and testimony; how readest thou? "I will be thy God and the God of thy seed. The promise is unto thee and to thy children." Because God delighted in the fathers to love them, therefore "he chose their seed after them." Whence come our unparalleled advantages? Whence comes it that ours are not the habitations of cruelty? Why are we not groaning under a tyrant's power? Why is not our conscience surrendered to the keeping of an ecclesiastic despot? Why have we a system of free schools and a free press? Why are not our children Gypsies, taught to roam and steal their daily bread? Why sit we under our own vine and fig tree, worshipping God, with none to molest us? There can be but a single answer.

Under God we owe it to the piety, the strong faith and profound wisdom of our fathers. Do we not owe them a debt of gratitude which we can repay only by imitating their example, and by handing down not only unimpaired but much improved by our greater experience, the invaluable institutions they have bequeathed us, to our children and children's children? Shall we not prove recreant to our sacred trust and invoke the vengeance of heaven, rather than its benediction, unless we feel and deeply feel and faithfully fulfil our obligations? Our hands are moulding the future lot of our children, and giving touches and shape to their future prospects. Should we break away from the great and fundamental principles which they so loved and valued, should we decline from the faithful discipline of the church and undervalue and neglect the gospel in its simplicity and purity; should we suffer the sabbath to decline in its lofty sanctity, and become careless and indifferent whether the rising generation be reared up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; should we so live as to grieve the Holy Spirit of God as to cause him to depart altogether from us, why then this result will follow, as surely as the Lord he is God: our children and our children's children will reap the bitter fruits of our moral husbandry for ages to come. Our obligations are great. The holy vows of God are upon us. We cannot shake them off if we would. In a world like this where sin abounds, where a thousand insidious influences are hourly at work adverse to the cause of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come, vigilance, the most prayerful vigilance, is demanded. We are the recipients of inestimable privileges from those who have preceded us, privileges not conferred for ourselves merely, but for the sake of those who are to succeed us. How, O how, if these privileges should fail to reach unborn generations through our unfaithfulness, can we meet those coming generations at the awful bar of God! Instead of the fathers you the children are to occupy the seats at the communion table on the next Lord's day. If you are really what you profess to be, think, O think how soon you will be with your fathers above. And then think whether you can die peacefully until you have seen

your children gathered into the fold of the great Shepherd. On whom is to devolve the support of these sacraments? On whom is to devolve the support of those heaven-ordained ordinances which were the glory and salvation of the fathers? What cause have we expect that our children will take them up and transmit them to their posterity except they be converted to God? How solemn, how momentous our obligations. Men and brethren with what solemn emphasis are we admonished to redoubled diligence and increased fidelity.



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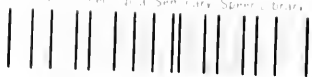
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